

WHILE the highly paid, highly trained professional he-men of the First Division were depriving the public of Bank Holiday football for fear of hurting their dear selves, Wycombe Wanderers were warming up for a spot of giant-killing by knocking over Watford's Football League middleweights.

Jack Charlton's First Division heavy mob came down from Middlesbrough on Saturday fully rested and ready to work out all the angles

of the famed and fearsome Loakes Park slope.

That Wycombe pitch is a problem which should take the averagely intelligent professional footballer all of three minutes to solve.

However, like the rest of our national heroes, Middlesbrough stayed steadfastly out of action this New Year's Day, concerned that it fell in FA Cup week.

It took Wycombe, unpretentious members of the Rothman's

BY JEFF POWELL

Isthmian League to keep the Third Round in perspective.

The fully fit two-thirds of their Saturday team built their confidence with a friendly but firm win over the assorted eleven manager Mike Keen brought down the road from Third Division Watford.

Wycombe also gave some 1,500 good people from this corner of

Buckinghamshire somewhere to spend their afternoon off.

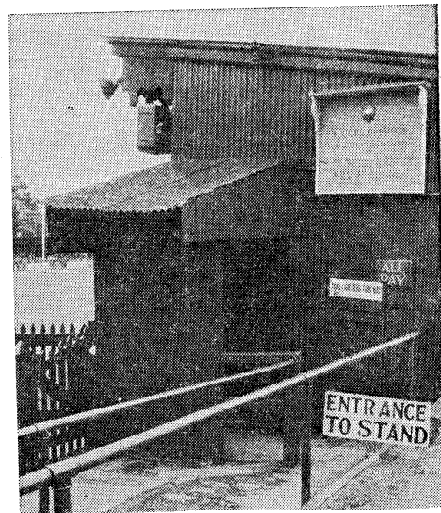
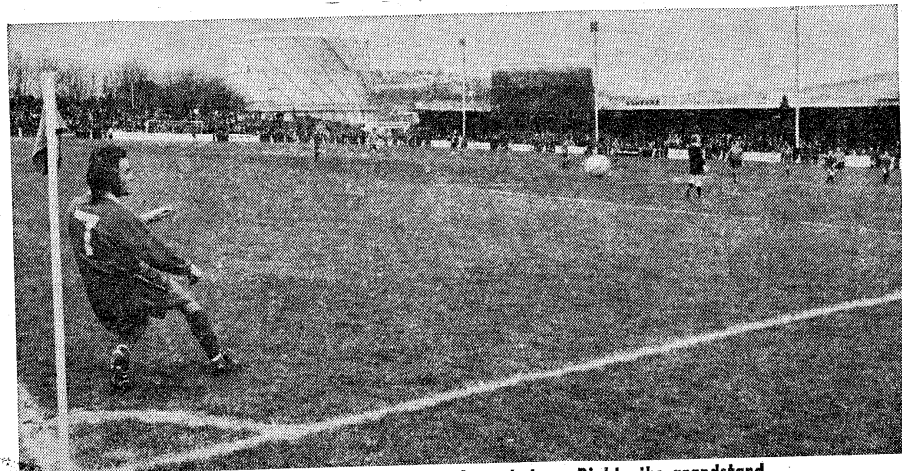
Loakes Park slopes through an 11ft. diagonal drop from one corner flag to another under the shade of Wycombe General Hospital, whose patients will have perhaps the clearest view of Saturday's emotional tilt at Middlesbrough.

Wycombe have not lost one of their non-League matches on this ground in the last two years. The slope is their most powerful weapon, even more potent than Tony Horse-

man the veteran and prolific goalscorer who was born locally and is very much the folk hero of Wycombe.

Yesterday that slope helped Wycombe beat Watford with a goal from Graham McKenzie, who does not expect to be picked against Middlesbrough.

No one expects Wycombe to produce a repeat performance on the big day. They are happy to be in the FA Cup's Third Round for the first time in 90 years.



A New Year's Day look at Loakes Park. Above: the feared slope. Right: the grandstand.
Pictures: MONTY FRESCO